

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 190609

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS; FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORG, UN, LE, IS

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: MOVEMENT OF LEBANESE TROOPS

REF: STATE 189490

1. IT WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED THAT SAUNDERS MAKE APPROACH
TO ISRAELI CHARGE BAR-ON, BUT AN APPOINTMENT TODAY, JULY 27,
PROVED IMPOSSIBLE TO WORK OUT. ON SAUNDERS' BEHALF, DRAPER
MET WITH ISRAELI COUNSELOR BENTSUR MORNING OF JULY 27 TO
DESCRIBE LEBANESE PLANS FOR DEPLOYMENT OF ARMY UNITS SOUTH.

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HE GAVE BENTSUR A PAPER, TEXT IN PARA 2 BELOW, AND MADE ALL
RPT ALL POINTS REFTTEL, SOME IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS BY BAR-ON.
HE MADE SOME ADDED POINTS, AS FOLLOWS:

-- AMBASSADORS LEWIS AND LEONARD HAD MET WITH WEIZMAN ON
JULY 26, PRIOR TO THIS LATEST INFORMATION FROM BEIRUT. IN
THIS TALK THE SUBJECT OF AN ANTICIPATED MOVEMENT OF ARMY

UNITS HAD COME UP. THE U.S., DRAPER STATED, WAS VERY PLEASED WITH WEIZMAN'S STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT THERE WOULD BE NO OBJECTION IN PRINCIPLE TO THE MOVEMENT OF A SMALLISH LEBANESE ARMY UNIT TO THE VERY AREA THE LEBANESE THEMSELVES INTENDED FOR DEPLOYMENT.

-- AMBASSADOR LEWIS WOULD BE SEEING WEIZMAN ON FRIDAY MORNING, JULY 28, TO ASK FOR ISRAELI COOPERATION IN THIS PLANNED OPERATION AND TO PRESENT THE INFORMATION DRAPER WAS PRESENTING ALONG WITH ANY SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION THAT MIGHT EMERGE BETWEEN NOW AND THEN.

-- WE HAVE BEEN PRESSING THE LEBANESE TO TAKE THE STEP FOR ALMOST A YEAR. BOLSTERED BY UNIFIL, IT WOULD BE A BEGINNING IN RESTORING THE LONG-TERM STABILITY IN THE AREA WHICH BOTH OUR GOVERNMENTS WANTED. UNIFIL WILL NOT REMAIN ENDLESSLY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.

-- IT HAD BEEN A DIFFICULT DECISION FOR THE LEBANESE TO TAKE. LEBANESE LEFTISTS WERE ALREADY OPPOSING IT AND PALESTINIAN CHALLENGES COULD DEVELOP.

-- THE LEBANESE UNIT INVOLVED WAS ONE WHICH ISRAEL HAD LONG BEEN SUSPICIOUS OF. ISRAEL BELIEVED IT HAD BEEN SUBORNED BY THE SYRIANS IN 1976. WE BELIEVE THAT, WHATEVER ITS EARLIER ASSOCIATION WITH THE SYRIANS, SECRET

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IT HAD RETURNED TO THE REGULAR ARMY FOLD MORE OR LESS INTACT AT THE END OF THE CIVIL CONFLICT. IT IS NOW UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE FIRST BRIGADE COMMANDER, COL. MICHEL KHOURY, BROTHER OF THE LEBANESE ARMY COMMANDER. OUR VIEW IS THAT THE LEBANESE HAVE TO BE THE BEST JUDGE OF THE LOYALTY, COHESION OF ITS ARMY UNITS, AS WELL AS OF ITS DESIRED CONFESSIONAL MAKEUP.

-- WE WOULD HAVE BEEN CONTENT WITH A FORCE OF ABOUT 300 MEN, BUT BELIEVE SUCH A FORCE SHOULD BE NUMERICALLY STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD OFF PALESTINIAN OR LEFTIST CHALLENGES WHICH MIGHT DEVELOP. 500 TO 600 MEN APPEAR SENSIBLE.

-- WE HAD LONG ENCOURAGED THE LEBANESE, AS ISRAEL KNOWS, TO DEVISE PRAGMATIC ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH THE HADDAD-SHIDIAC PROBLEM. THE LEBANESE APPARENTLY ARE MOVING IN THIS DIRECTION. IT IS CLEAR THEY ARE NOT BEING SACRIFICED OR PUNISHED. THE ISRAELIS PRESUMABLY WILL ASK FOR DETAILS OF LEBANESE PLANS AT THE ILMAC MEETING AND IT IS POSSIBLE THE LEBANESE WILL BE WILLING TO SUPPLY DETAILS. WE HOPE THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD BE

OPEN-MINDED.

2. BEGIN TEXT: AT 1730 ON JULY 26 FOREIGN AND DEFENSE
MINISTER BOUTROS INFORMED OUR AMBASSADOR THAT THE

LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO SEND LEBANESE ARMY
TROOPS INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON BY JULY 30 OR JULY 31 AT THE
LATEST. FOLLOWING ARE THE DETAILS OF THIS OPERATION AS
PROVIDED BY THE LEBANESE:

-- ROUTE - TROOPS WILL MOVE DOWN BEKAA VIA KFAR MISHKI AND
KAWKABA. THEY WILL PASS BY BUT NOT ENTER MARJAYUN.
RATHER, THEY WILL BE BETWEEN THAT TOUN AND AL-KHIAM AND
THENCE TO TELL NHAS, KFAR KILA, ADAYSSE, AND TAYBEH TO
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TIBNINE. TROOPS WILL BE STATIONED IN THE TIBNINE-
QA'QA'IYYAH REGION.

-- COMPOSITION - TROOPS WILL BE COMPOSED OF ONE BATTALION
OF ABOUT 500 MEN TAKEN FROM THE FIRST BRIGADE NOW
STATIONED IN THE BEKAA. THEY WILL BE 60 PERCENT MOSLEM,
LARGELY SHI'A, AND 40 PERCENT CHRISTIAN, ABOUT HALF OF
WHOM WILL BE MARONITES. THE COMMANDER WILL BE COL. ADIB
SAAD, A MARONITE. MAJOR IBRAHIM SHAHIN, A SHI'A, WILL BE
HIS DEPUTY.

-- THE SYRIANS HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO PREVENT PALESTINIAN
CHALLENGES TO THE LEBANESE ARMY UNIT IN THE STRETCH OF
ROAD BETWEEN KFAR MISHKI AND KAWKABA. THE SYRIANS HAVE
ALSO UNDERTAKEN TO KEEP THE ROAD OPEN AS A LINE OF
COMMUNICATION.

-- THE LEBANESE INTEND TO NOTIFY THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT 48
HOURS IN ADVANCE OF PLANNED MOVEMENT OF THE LEBANESE UNIT
THAT THEY WANTED AN ILMAC MEETING. AT THAT TIME, THE
LEBANESE WOULD REVIEW ALL DETAILS OF THEIR PLANS.

-- THE LEBANESE HAVE DISCUSSED THEIR PLANS WITH GENERAL
CUQ AND THEY INTENDED TO SEE UNIFIL POLITICAL ADVISER
AIME ON JULY 28. END TEXT.

3. BENTSUR UNDERTOOK TO PASS ABOVE TO HIS GOVERNMENT
IMMEDIATELY. CHRISTOPHER

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